

**Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.**

### **Christians make a fashion statement every day!**

If you were here last Sunday, you might think that you are getting a rerun. When I studied this text a few weeks ago, I couldn't decide what I should emphasize. There is so much in this text. So I decided to write two sermons on the same text. Last week you heard the emphasis on letting the word of Christ dwell in you richly. Today I want to emphasize the first part of the text. **"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience."**

This is a great time of the year for making a fashion statement in 2015. Children, did you get some new clothes for Christmas? Are you eager to wear that new sweater or that new coat to school this week? Do you have a new dress you can't wait to wear for some special occasion? I like to wear new clothes. I know my wife does, too, and she actually likes it when I notice that she is wearing something new, which doesn't always happen.

There is an old saying that says, "The clothes make the man." I don't know how true that is, but it is definitely true of the Christian. We wear the robes of righteousness that Jesus' gives us, and it makes a difference.

#### **I. We are dressed for eternity**

Do you realize that you get to wear new clothes *every single day*? Listen to what Paul says in our text. **"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved...."** I read those verses and my conscience immediately reacts to those words. Me? Chosen? Holy? Dearly loved? "Heavenly Father, how can you be talking about me in these verses? Don't you see all the things I've done wrong in my life? The word "holy" means perfect and without sin. I know that I sin every day, and so do you. We sin when we are watching television and get a thrill out of watching adultery. We sin when we see that computer ad and wish we could have put that on our Christmas list. We sin when we sit on that couch absorbed in some violent or silly story, but we leave our children I. "Sorry, children, but I can't help you with homework tonight. Can't you see I'm busy?" Holy and dearly loved? How could God be talking to me in these verses?

We sin because we have sin that is deeply rooted in our hearts. Jesus said, **"For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander."** You don't just one day commit adultery in the same way that you might have a car accident. It doesn't just happen. It starts with thinking about it in your mind and in your heart before it ever happens. You don't just slander someone out of the clear blue sky and say something bad about them. You were thinking about that person and you had judgmental thoughts in your mind. Then you decided that you had to tell someone about that person and what they did. It came out of your heart a long time before it came out of your mouth. And what a lot of people don't realize is that all of those thoughts and feelings in our hearts are also sin – even if we never did actually do the thing we were thinking about.

And God in heaven can see the innermost thoughts of our hearts. So heavenly Father, how can you say this to me? How can you say that I your chosen and holy and dearly loved people? But that is what we are. How can God say that about us? Paul said in Galatians 3: 26-27: **“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”** Through faith in Jesus and through your baptism, you are clothed with Jesus. Jesus’ holiness and his righteousness are wrapped around you so tight that God cannot see the sins that lay beneath that robe of righteousness. You see them, because you are on the inside and you see all that ugliness that comes out of your heart. But God does not see your sins. You have been washed and cleaned in the blood of Jesus. You are God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved.

Children, think of it this way. If you saw me out in the garden in my work clothes, you might not even recognize me. I would have a stained pair of blue jeans on, and an old flannel shirt. I might have a straw hat or my favorite floppy hat on my head. I would be sweaty and dirty and wearing a pair of gloves and old overshoes. I probably don’t look like a pastor when I am working in a garden. But when I serve at the altar here in church, I wear a robe and a stole and I look like a pastor. In the same way, maybe you don’t always look like God’s chosen people, his dearly loved and holy people. You don’t look like saints, but that is what you are. By faith in Jesus, you get to wear Jesus every day. You wear his robes of righteousness, which makes you holy in God’s sight.

Friends, that makes a big difference in our lives, doesn’t it? In fact, it makes all the difference in the world. Someday, you are going to stand before the throne of God and so will I. That should make us afraid, because we are sinful people. It should terrify us, but it does not. We know that God will not judge us on the basis of how many commandments we have broken or kept. God will judge us only on the basis of whether or not we are wearing the new clothes of Jesus’ righteousness. If we believe in Jesus, if we trust that his death atoned for our sins, then we know what God’s judgment will be. You are God’s chosen people, God’s holy and dearly loved people!

That makes such a difference as we approach the end of our lives. It also changes the way we live our lives every day.

## II. We are dressed for every day

Have you ever noticed that when you wear some special clothes it makes you look and act differently? I find that when I put on my best suit, I stand a little straighter and a little taller than I did before. When I put on my pastor’s robe, I feel a responsibility to represent God and to teach his Word in its truth and purity. I would imagine that if you are a police officer, and you put on that uniform that identifies you as a police officer, that you feel a greater responsibility to act as someone who has been given that authority to make our streets and highways safe.

So what affect does it have on you when you are dressed in the robes of Jesus’ righteousness as God’s holy and dearly loved people? Paul tells us. **Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.”** Put these words together and tell me what or who I am describing: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiving, loving. That looks like Jesus, doesn’t it? When you are clothed with Christ, you begin to look like Jesus more and more every day.

You are filled with compassion. No one was ever more filled with compassion than Jesus. He came down from heaven to walk in our shoes, to experience our hardships, to be tempted with our temptations. When he saw a widow carrying her son out to the cemetery as he approached the little city of Nain, it says that his heart went out to her. He felt so sorry for this poor woman that he went

over and touched the coffin and the young man came alive again. He turned the funeral procession into a celebration and a party.

When you clothe yourself with Jesus, you will find yourself acting in the same way. You stop thinking about yourself and you start thinking more about the people around you. Your heart goes out to them. Children, do you have someone in your class who is always getting picked on, or who doesn't seem to have many friends? Your Jesus-heart goes out to that person. Be their friend. Do something to keep them from getting picked on. Always remember that you are God's holy and dearly loved people.

What else does Jesus have for us to wear? Paul says to clothe yourself with **kindness**. When you follow Jesus' ministry, what do you see him doing every day? He was constantly healing people of their sicknesses. He touched a leper to heal him even though lepers were really gross. He spent all day preaching to a huge crowd, and then he fed them dinner by making a few fish and loaves of bread feed them all.

Children, what would you look like if you clothed yourself with Jesus' kindness? You'd offer to do the dishes for mom without being asked. You'd help your little brother with his homework. Or maybe you would help him pick up his toys, because sometimes little kids have a hard time picking up their toys. You might even let him play with the new toy that you got for Christmas.

Parents, what would it look like if you clothed yourself with Jesus' kindness in all your actions with your spouse? What if you offered to do the dishes? What if you gave her a neck rub? What if you picked up the house and took out the garbage? What if you bought her flowers even when it wasn't Valentine's Day? Do you think that you would get worn out just doing all those acts of kindness? I think that's one of the lies the devil tells us, that acts of kindness will wear us out. If you are clothed with Jesus, doing acts of kindness is not a chore. It's who you are.

Next Paul says we should cloth ourselves with **humility**. No one wore humility better than Jesus did. He was the Son of God, the king of Kings, the Lord of lords. Yet he never thought that there was something beneath his dignity or position to do. So when the disciples came to the upper room on the night Jesus celebrated the first Lord's Supper, who washed the feet of those at the table? Jesus did. He didn't do it to shame them. He didn't just pretend to be their servant. Jesus actually didn't consider himself to be better than others. Isn't that amazing? The Son of God didn't think he was better than others!

So what does it look like when you clothe yourself with Jesus' humility? Paul said in Philippians 2:3-4: **Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.** Children, I want you to think about this for a moment. Do you think you are better than your brother or your sister? Husbands, do you think you are better than your wife? Wives, do you think you are better than your husbands? Or do you think you are better than all those slobs you work with? This is getting hard, isn't it? That's why it is so important to be refreshed in forgiveness every day. Isn't it good to know that we get to put on the fresh clothes of Jesus' righteousness every single day?

Dare we go on? Remember, it's fun to wear new clothes! Paul says we should put on **gentleness and patience**. I've lumped these two together because these adjectives describe so well Jesus' ministry. It's how Jesus deals with each and every one of you in your life circumstances. How many times has Jesus given you another chance? Sometimes I think we live on second chances. Jesus is a good shepherd who tends his flock with gentleness and patience.

Children, can I pick on your parents for moment? What does gentleness and patience look like when you are raising your children? What tone of voice does it require? What kind of discipline does it require? I think as parents we can fail our children in two different ways. One is that we think that all we have to do is remind them just once, and that should be enough. Children need our gentle patience. Teaching them means correcting their mistakes over and over and over again. The other mistake we can make is that we just give up and let them win. Gentle patience means that we don't stop being parents

because it is hard work. And remember, if you failed at your God-given calling to be gentle and patient parents today, you get to wear the new clothes of Jesus' righteousness every day.

Next Paul says, **"Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."** Can you imagine? What if every day we gave our spouse a do over? Or our children? Or our parents? Or our friends? Our students? Our teachers? Our co-workers? What if we gave them a clean slate every day and never held a grudge? A grievance is an unresolved hurt that some brought into our lives. What if we resolved that hurt, every day, with forgiveness? I think the greatest fashion statement a Christian can make is to forgive. You get to wear this accessory to your robe of righteousness every single day. Jesus lets you wear HIS forgiveness. How is that going to make your life different today?

There is one last item on Paul's list of things to wear. **"And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace."** Love is the crown jewel in your Christian wardrobe. It is an unselfish, untiring, undeserved love for anyone you live with or work with. It's what binds all the other virtues together. It is the reason for your compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. It's what defines who you are. It's why you are the peace-maker in your home and in your community and in your church. You are not the person you were born to be. You are not just a product of your upbringing or your environment. God gave you a wonderful make-over in Christ, and you wear the robes of Jesus' righteousness. This is what defines you. This is what makes you different.

And remember. You get to put on these beautiful new clothes every single day. You are God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, dressed in the robes of Jesus' righteousness. Can I make a suggestion for this week? When you get up in the morning read these verses. Remember who you really are in Christ. Then go out and make a fashion statement to the world! Amen.